





# LSBA Children's Law Committee: History, Mission and Initiatives

By Kären A. Hallstrom

In 2009, at the request of the state Legislative Task Force on Legal Representation in Child Protection Cases, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) created the Children's Law Committee as a forum for all attorneys practicing law related to children's issues, including judges, children's attorneys, parents' attorneys, public defenders and attorneys representing the state.

The committee engages in initiatives designed to benefit children, their parents and the professionals who serve them. In accordance with the Task Force recommendations, this committee supports dialogue among attorneys and judges on children's issues, promotes awareness to the general Bar membership of legal issues involving children, and honors Louisiana attorneys and organizations providing outstanding services in the field of children's law. Originally established as an ad hoc committee, the Children's Law Committee was re-designated as a standing committee of the LSBA in 2017.

## Initiatives

The Children's Law Committee has actively engaged in several initiatives, including:

- ▶ Creation of videos in English and Spanish that explain the role of court personnel to children in the foster care system and the procedure of Child in Need of Care (CINC) proceedings.

- ▶ Revision of the LSBA "Coming of Age" manual and establishment of a mobile website to provide legal information to children reaching the age of 18.

- ▶ Outreach to law schools to promote careers in children's law.

- ▶ Provision of attorney training opportunities and informational sessions for the public on a variety of child-related subjects, including special education and adoption law.

- ▶ Recognition of legal professionals who work in children's law through the annual LSBA Children's Law Award.

## NACC Child Welfare Law Certification

Children's law is not considered a specialization by the Louisiana Board of Legal Specialization. However, the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) provides a Child Welfare Law Certification, accredited by the American Bar Association and endorsed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the Conference of Chief Justices/Conference of State Court Administrators. NACC Child Welfare Law Certification is available to attorneys who serve in the role of child's attorney, parent's attorney and agency/department/government attorney in child protection proceedings.

Child Welfare Law Certification requires a rigorous application process, including 36 hours of specialized education and a comprehensive examination. To date, 28 attorneys in Louisiana have become NACC Child Welfare Law Specialists, and many others are in the process.

## Children's Law Committee Website

Visit [www.lsba.org/childrenslaw](http://www.lsba.org/childrenslaw) to learn more about the LSBA Children's Law Committee and find helpful resources

for both attorneys and young people. Review information:

- ▶ "Becoming an Adult" guide for Louisiana youth.

- ▶ Orientation videos for children entering foster care and/or child protection cases.

- ▶ Training opportunities.

- ▶ Substantive articles.

## LSBA Children's Law Award

The LSBA Children's Law Award is presented annually to an attorney and/or Louisiana-based organization providing outstanding services in children's law.

The 2018 recipients are the Louisiana Parole Project, a nonprofit organization responding to the needs of individuals who were sentenced to life without parole for crimes committed when they were children, and Cherrilynne Washington Thomas, an assistant district attorney for Orleans Parish Juvenile Court. *For photos and profiles, go to page 121.*

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